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AUTHOR Boileau, Don M.
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ABSTRACT

Suggestions for the development of a national perspective on the place of functional communication competencies in the speech communication curriculum are presented in this paper. The first section of the paper describes current trends in functional communication curriculum development, including the theoretical perspectives underlying various interpretations of functional communication, the activities of the Speech Communication Association in this area, and various curriculum development projects recently undertaken across the United States. The second section of the paper provides a framework for integrating functional communication instruction into the speech communication curriculum. (FL)

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FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Don M. Boileau
Director of Educational Services
Speech Communication Association

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Panel B: Functional Communication Competencies

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The movie "On Golden Pond" features a not uncommon scene where one of the characters has one foot on the dock and the other foot on a boat moving away in the lake. A similar, unpleasant accident may happen to the speech profession unless we as speech professionals find a way to unite the "functional communication" perspective and the "public speaking" perspective. A way exists to merge these two viewpoints but a way also exists for these two perspectives to split apart, leaving speech communication dumped back into the sea of anonymity.

To develop a national perspective in discussing curriculum is a risky business, since each state and/or school provides an excellent opportunity to be an exception. Toulmin's model of argument suggests, with so many exceptions possible, powerful qualifications are needed for any conclusion. Thus this paper will be guilty of providing one person's belief on where the national perspective ought to be rather than providing evidence of the golden mean on the current national reflection of functional communication. First, a description of some of the curriculum aspects of current trends in speech communication will be noted in relationship to efforts by the Speech Communication Association. Then, an explanation of how these different efforts ought to fit together will give my perception of the national perspective on functional communication.

CURRENT TRENDS

To understand current trends a person can examine major parts and still not grasp the total picutre. But until someone draws that picture, the best approach is to examine the major pieces. For functional communciation in the schools the major pieces are current theoretical perspectives, publications,

research, curriculum projects, and activities in the profession. These pieces will substitute for the view one can obtain by seeing how speech is taught in 16,000 secondary schools, 1600 colleges and universities, and over 2000 community colleges.

Current theoretical perspectives: In 1973 Wells identified five "categories" of communication. These five functions--controlling, feeling, informing, ritualizing, and imagining--form the heart of the expanded view of communication. (See Chart One.) Already in classrooms since the 1960's intra- and inter-personal communication were joining the traditional speech courses on public speaking, group discussion, and oral interpretation. The mass media impact was sporadically developed as interest in radio and/or television grew. Interest in dyadic communication created a spectrum as others urged treating the communication effects of the mass media. The "total" view of the communication spectrum was given a boost by Well's functions. This functional viewpoint obtained the speech communication researchers' and curriculum specialists' blessing in a national conference reported in Developing Communication Competence in Children.

As the purposes of speech making (inform, persuade, entertain, convince, etc.) among curriculum specialists were replaced with an enlarged conception of audience, the changes in research methodologies led to a major shift in the field's conception of itself. Thus, the functions became a convenient area of theory to support these changes. No longer was speech limited to distinguishing among Aristotle's purposes of speaking in the legislative arena, the courts, or general audiences. Now the spectrum included a range of audences from self to one another, to a small group, to a public audience, to a mass audience via the media.

Chart One

COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS

1. CONTROLLING. These are communication acts in which the participants' dominant function is to control behavior: for example, commanding, offering, suggesting, permitting, threatening, warning, prohibiting, contracting, refusing, bargaining, rejecting, acknowledging, justifying, persuading, and arguing.

2. FEELING. These are communication acts which express and respond to feelings and attitudes, such as, exclaiming, expressing a state or an attitude, taunting, commiserating, tale-telling, blaming, disagreeing, and rejecting.

3. INFORMING. These are communication acts in which the participants' function is to offer or seek information: for example, stating information, questioning, answering, justifying, naming, pointing out an object, demonstrating, explaining, and acknowledging.

4. RITUALIZING. These are communication acts which serve primarily to maintain social relationships and to facilitate social interaction, such as, greeting, taking leave, participating in verbal games (pat-a-cake), reciting, taking turns in conversations, participating in culturally appropriate speech modes (for example, teasing, shocking, punning, praying, playing the dozens), and demonstrating culturally appropriate amenities.

5. IMAGINING. These are communication acts which cast the participants in imaginary situations and include creative behaviors such as role playing, fantasizing, speculating, dramatizing, theorizing, and storytelling.

from Wood, Barbara Sundene (Ed.), Development of Functional Communication Competencies: Grades 7-12. ERIC/RCS and SCA (April 1977).

Professional Activities: As these contexts changed, Well's functions fit the new demands, but now the question was, "What is the image of speech?" The public perspective of speech as public speaking did not fit what was being taught or researched. The name change of the professional association to the Speech Communication Association reflected the compromise.

Programs at the national and regional associations pushed "functional communication." A video taped demonstration program was circulated among state associations as a way to reach teachers. Two TRIP booklets edited by Barbara Wood were major sellers for the SCA module of ERIC/RCS. These books were purchased by methods teachers for their classes and members wanting to know "how to teach the functions." The "Standards for Effective Oral Communication Programs" reflected the expanded viewpoint. While the Association does not take official positions on curricular approaches, the activities of curriculum leaders in the association indicated an endorsement of the position.

Publications. While articles in Communication Education began to reflect theoretical aspects of fucntional communication, the successful dissemination of the Allen and Brown (eds.) volume Developing Communication Competence in Children not only reached members in SCA, but also was purchased by curriculum people outside the field. As teachers purchased the two TRIP volumes--Development of Functional Communication Competencies: Pre-K - Grade 6 and Development of Functional Communication Competencies: Grades 7 - 12--knowledge of the functional approach spread.

Yet, the idea of functional communication has not been widely publicized outside of speech, English, language development, and linguistics. Many of the educational publications that reach large audiences of educators in the schools have not published articles on this approach. Neither of the elementary and secondary principals organizations have carried major works on functional communication nor have the two major educational honoraries, Phi Delta Kappa

and Kappa Delta Pi. The large circulation teaching magazines--Learning and Instructor--have not carried appropriate materials.

The competency movement gave a major push for functional communication. Since the answer to the question "What does a competent communicator do?" sets up the five categories of functional communication, the functional communication perspective is essential. Thus, the publication by SCA of the "Minimal Competencies in Speaking and Listening for High School Graduates" set a new standard. These nineteen competencies illustrated by the occupational, citizenship, and maintenance situations fit the functional approach in that all are covered and a multiple purpose perspective must be adopted. Since a person may engage in several functions in a given exchange, the functional perspective does not break down into discrete units of focus in the same way that a unit or semester on public speaking would.

These competencies reflect performances in given situations. From the SCA standards one might assume that the competent communicator has skills appropriate to a range of (a) situations, (b) purposes, (c) communication forms, (d) audiences, and (e) speaking styles. The Allen and Brown volume defined communication competence as reflecting a person's ability to (a) develop a repertoire of communication acts, (b) select a criteria for making choices from that repertoire, (c) implement the communication acts chosen, and (d) evaluate the effectiveness of communication employed. Since these publications are embracing the functional approach, their position seems ensured.

Curriculum Projects: The Educational Policies Board is commissioning a book on teaching the SCA competencies for speaking and listening. (Note: dropping the word "minimal" in the 1982 reprint of the statement.) Dingle

Associates, under the auspices of the Department of Education, is developing a series (12 volumes) on improving writing and speaking skills in the K-12 curriculum. The project utilizes the functional approach for both writing and speaking.

Such activity would lead one to conclude that the functional approach is firmly in place. But when talking with principals, school board members, curriculum specialists, and classroom teachers, the impression is that functional communication is not well known. Even the textbooks do not directly reflect the functional approach. In July 1978 Mark Grueneberg wrote on a perspective for the classroom teacher that suggested the confusion about the functional approach. Grueneberg argued that integrating functional communication from SCA's National Project on Speech Communication Competencies with the state objectives along with the SCA competencies was a demanding task. His option was to choose what he thought valuable about functional communication, the state objectives, and the competencies. Thus, the challenge is to convince teachers how to integrate a philosophy with a set of competencies in light of traditional approaches.

THE GOAL: INTEGRATION OF FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Although a conscious choice was not made, functional communication was treated as a separate entity rather than a philosophy. Functional communication can integrate itself with any number of approaches by use of a matrix. Figure One shows such an integration developed by Allen and Kellner. On one side the categories are used in relationship to types of audience contexts.

Figure One

A Matrix for Generating

Curricula in Communication

Dimension One: Functions of Communication

Dimension Two: Communication Contexts	Informing	Expressing Feeling	Imagining	Ritualizing	Controlling
Mass Communication					
Public Communication					
Small Group Communication			*		
Dyadic Communication					
Intrapersonal Communication					

* Each cell involves both message initiation and message reception skills.

"From the five major functions of communication and the five major audience contexts for communication, teachers can develop curricula that reflect the variety of functions and audiences served by communication in society."

R. R. Allen and Robert Kellner, "Integrating the Language Arts Curriculum"

One can repeat the same process with units currently being used in class. The advantage of the matrix is that it allows systematic planning to occur. This planning allows the teacher to integrate both the expanded spectrum of communication situations/audiences/forms and styles and the fucntional language choices reflecting purpose. The result for the students should be an increased awareness of the pervasiveness of communication as well as increased skill handling communication.

But the teacher cannot handle this as either a speech communication or a functional communication --an integration must occur. Since the teacher draws on the strengths of previous practice to achieve this integration, the frame of reference allows other factors to be integrated also. Those factors may vary from the objective of the state to SCA's competencies.

This integration must be skillfully done so that result is clearly communicated to students, administrators, parents, and the public. It will take time, but if the external communication does not occur, then the future of functional communication as a curricular force will diminish as the public's perception of the field will not reflect the field.